PRINTZLAU

PRIVATHOSPITAL

Information on ear correction

Bat ears

Bat ears are congenital. It is impossible to determine exactly when ears are considered bat ears, but we generally cannot recommend surgery if the backside of the ear is situated less than 2 cm from the “head”. For some, having protruding ears is a big psycho-social problem, and usually children are offered an ear correction by request from their parents.

If there are signs of bat ears or lop ears on a newborn child, the doctor is actually able to ”mold” the ears with a bandage over the first couple of weeks of the child’s life. Beyond this point, the ear cartilage will harden, and the shape becomes difficult or impossible to alter without any surgery.

Bat ears and lop ears are caused either by the shell of the ear being too deep, or by the ”bend” of the ear lacking definition, or it could be a combination of both problems. Depending on the anatomy of the problem, you will be offered surgery using different techniques.

Techniques

Closed surgery for bat ears

Surgery on the ear shell (conchae resection)
With an incision on the backside of the ear, a half moon-shaped piece of cartilage is removed from the deep ear shell. The cartilage is sewn together, which pulls the lateral edge of the ear closer to the head. Alternatively, the entire ear shell can be sewn in closer to the head.

Surgery on the curled lop ear Through an incision on the backside of the ear, a tunnel is made under the skin on the outside of the ear cartilage where the folding of the ear is not incomplete. By weakening the outside of the cartilage and in some cases putting in threads on the backside of the ear, the folding can be reshaped and made more pronounced, and the top and lateral edge of the ear come closer to the head.

Open surgery for bat ears

For those with ears that have both a deep ear shell a folded top rim of the ear, an open surgery is an option. With the open surgery, the ear cartilage is revealed completely so that it can be reshaped by filing it down on the front side and removing excess cartilage. The scar is still placed on the backside of the ear.

Surgery on children

Of course, children can only have surgery with consent from their parents or guardian. If the extent of the problem is only considered cosmetic, the child is not eligible for surgery. This is a protection of the children in the legislation on cosmetic treatments. We generally advise against surgery on children under the age of 14. In part because it can be difficult for them to cooperate to being under local anesthesia, and in part because it can be very difficult to assess a young child's own desire for surgery. We do not offer general anesthesia to small children.

Other ear corrections

"Elf ears"

Some people have a small pointy tip at the top of the ear ridge on one or both sides. This can be corrected with a small surgery under local anesthesia. In some cases, a small part wedge of the ear is removed. Most often, the scar can be put on the backside of the ridge of the ear, but in some cases scars on the outside cannot be avoided completely.

Additional ear cartilage

In the fetal state, sometimes a small additional ear cartilage forms, typically in front of the ear and towards the cheek. The removal of the additional cartilage may be quite simple, but in some cases, fistulas (small ducts) may have been hidden underneath, in which case this should be further elucidated at an ear-nose-throat department.

Consequences of earrings

Openings/damage caused by earrings may have resulted in a cleft in the earlobes or protruding earlobes after many years of wear or intentional stretching of the earlobe. In many cases the earlobes can be reconstructed, but the surgery will leave a permanent scar on the earlobes.

The course of the surgery; from first consultation to follow-up

During your first consultation, the plastic surgeon will consult with you based on your wishes and expectations to the surgery in regards to possibilities and limitations. You will receive information about surgical options, what is realistic to expect after the surgery and what consequences and risks the surgery or surgeries may entail.

Before the consultation you will be asked to fill out a form concerning your general health, allergies, medicine, and personal data as well as a consent form in regards to surgery and permission for the hospital to share information.

Your face and ears are meticulously photographed for “before and after” photos, if the surgery is eventually carried out.

All of this data is protected by the Danish personal data legislation as well as our confidentiality. You will receive written information on the procedure, or you may print it from our website on your own if you prefer.

Danish legislation on “cosmetic treatment” requires that you wait a minimum of seven days from your first consultation before you can make an appointment for the desired surgery.

As a private patient you have the right to bring an assessor with you to your consultation if you wish to do so.

The surgery

Ambulant ear corrections under local anesthesia

Local anesthesia is administered as an ”ear block”, all the way around the root of the ear. You are fully awake under the operation and able to talk and communicate with the staff. You are to meet at the hospital an hour before the operation. The nurse will the greet you and inform you on the procedure.

After a surgery with larger incisions, a compression bandage will be put on. You must remain at the hospital for a short while for observation and for the nurse to begin the pain-relieving treatment.

After the surgery
If a compression bandage has been put on, this must be worn both day and night for a week. During the first nights you should lay with your head slightly elevated when you sleep in order to reduce swelling.

That means you will not be presentable in the first week following the surgery. After removal of the compression bandage, the ears will be swollen and in some cases discolored for up to 3 weeks. The stitches are removed after 10 days.

You will sleep with a headband for the first 3 weeks following the surgery to prevent the ear from folding while you sleep.

The follow-up with your plastic surgeon is scheduled 3 months after the surgery.

Ear correction under full anesthesia

The surgery is a so-called ”same-day surgical procedure” (short hospitalization). If you are to be operated on under full anesthesia, you are to be fasting for a minimum of 6 hours before the surgery, but you can drink water up until 2 hours before the surgery. When you arrive, the nurse in the hospital ward will greet you and help you get ready for surgery. After the surgery you are transferred to the recovery room where you will be observed and monitored until you are fully awake. Most patients are ready to return home directly from the recovery room, but a few stay in the hospital ward for a short while after.

After the surgery
If a compression bandage has been put on, you should wear it day and night for a week. For the first few nights, you should lay with you head in a slightly elevated position. Both of these will reduce the tendency for the ears to swell.

That means you will not be presentable in the first week following the surgery.

After removal of the compression bandage, the ears will be swollen and in some cases discolored for up to 3 weeks. The stitches are removed after 10 days.

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Subsequent effects

Swelling

You can experience swelling for several weeks after having an ear correction. This is very individual and is primarily a cosmetic concern.

Scars

During the first three months, the scars are red and swollen, but after this period they slowly lighten and flatten. It takes up to two years before the final result of the scars can be evaluated

Reduced sensitivity

It is quite common to experience reduced sensitivity of the skin on the ear after having an ear surgery. For that reason, it is important to protect the ear from damage due to cold weather and from the ear folding during sleep. Sensitivity will return after up to 3 months.

Risks of complications

Bleeding

It is important to prevent bleeding after ear surgery. This is done with a compression bandage. Despite of this, if bleeding occurs under the bandage or you have pain, you must immediately return to the hospital. If the bleeding is not treated there may be permanent damage on the ear cartilage and the ear may suffer irreversible damage.

Infections

Infections after ear corrections are very rare. Redness, warmth and swelling will appear. Typically, this is treated with antibiotics, but in rare cases it is necessary to treat the infection surgically. If untreated, an infection can ruin the result of the correction because of damage to the cartilage or due to the formation of scar tissue. It is important that you immediately contact the hospital at any signs of infection.

Durability

If the result lasts through the healing period, it will last for the rest of your life. However, the ears continue to grow very slowly for the rest of your life, which is why the look of your ears will change a little bit. Earrings will also pull on the earlobes, causing them to lengthen over time.